8.

THE CHURCH

THAT

CHRIST LOVED.

A DISCOURSE

PREACHED BEFORE THE

SYNOD OF PENNSYLVANIA,

IN CALVARY CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA,

OCTOBER 17, 1855.

BY

WILLIAM R. DE WITT,

SENIOR PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, HARRISBURG.

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Rev. Wm. R. De Witt, D. D.

Rev. and Dear Sir:—

We solicit in behalf of the Synod of Pennsylvania, agreeably to its unanimous request, a copy of your discourse on "The Church," preached before that body on the evening of the 17th inst., believing that its evangelical and catholic spirit is well suited to the times, and will tend to advance the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom.

David Malin,
A. Converse,
Adam H. Hinkel, } Committee.

October 19, 1855.

Rev. D. Malin, Rev. Dr. Converse and A. H. Hinkel, Esq., Committee of Synod.

Gentlemen:—

At the request of Synod, I place the discourse preached in Calvary Church, on last evening, in your hands. You will readily perceive from the manuscript that the discourse was not prepared, nor is it now corrected for the press. I have not leisure to correct it myself, but consent to its publication under your inspection, in the hope, that it may have some tendency to check the spirit of denominationalism, which I fear is at present, in our own and other sections of the Church, sadly entrenching on the devotion we should ever cherish to the Church Christ loved, and for which He gave himself.

Very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,
Wm. R. De Witt.

Philadelphia, Logan Square,
October 19, 1855.

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SERMON.

Ephesians, v. 25.

"CHRIST ALSO LOVED THE CHURCH."

THE heart of Christ beats with no vague emotions. It is full of holy affections, yet these have ever some definite object. When the Apostle tells us "Christ loved the Church," he embraces in this term an object distinctly contemplated by the Son of God, which awoke in his heart a love, whose manifestations are the fullest developments of the divinity itself.

What, then, is that Church which Christ loved? Why did he, and does he yet love it? And how has this love been manifested? An answer to these questions, which we propose to attempt, will suggest, we trust, some important instruction relative to the discriminations we should make in reference to the Church of Christ, the place that Church should hold in our affections, and the duties we owe to her. It may be proper, perhaps, to state in advance,

that I have no new or novel theory to present in regard to the Church, and intend to enter into no discussion of theories that have been advanced. My object will be to present some plain truths familiar to you all, in the hope of stirring up your pure minds by way of remembrance, and inducing a more ardent and self-denied devotion to the cause of the Redeemer.

In the first place, what is the Church which Christ loved? The meaning of the Apostle is distinctly intimated by his language in reference to it. It is the Church for which Christ gave himself, that He might sanctify and cleanse it, and ultimately present it to Himself a glorious Church, holy and without blemish. It, then, embraces the whole number of the elect of our fallen race, and them alone—those whom God predestinated to eternal life, and chose in Christ from before the foundations of the world—those who were given to Him in the covenant of redemption, as the travail of His soul—the reward of His humiliation. They have existed through all the successive generations of men, from the promulgation of the first promise, immediately after the apostacy, down to the present moment. The fires of their sacrifices burned on antediluvian altars, and were rekindled amid the deso-

lations of a rescued world. They had their abodes in the tents of the old patriarchs, and they worshipped God in the solitudes of their ancient groves. When God in judgment forsook the rest of the world, and gave them up to their delusions and their lusts, He preserved the holy seed among the generations of His chosen people; and in the darkest days of Israel's apostacy, there were those who bore the seal of His Spirit, and were the witnesses of His grace and truth. The coming of Christ broke the bonds of the restricted covenant, and in the redemption of the promises made to the fathers, the number of the saved were greatly multiplied. Since then, wherever the gospel has been sent, it has won its triumphs over human depravity, and called out from the world those, who have borne the image of the heavenly, and for whom to live was Christ, and to die was gain. The world has never been without them —it is upheld in existence for their sakes alone. They are now "in the midst of many people, as a dew from the Lord, and as showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man." They are found, not only in those favored lands on which the true Shekinah has long rested, but in savage wilds, far off, where the pale crescent gleams,

and in lands of darkness, around the habitations of cruelty. These, then, are now the elect of God, the first fruits of missionary toil, the earnests of a blessed harvest. Out of the generations that are yet to be, they will be called and gathered as long as the world exists—until the last heir of heaven's eternal kingdom, from this apostate race, is safely brought within the pale of God's Holy Covenant. The day will come!—yes, the light of its morning now dawns upon the mountains, when the Spirit shall be poured out from on high, and converts to holiness exceed the drops of the dew in the morning. Ages of peace, and light, and love, will succeed to these years of darkness, and toil, and conflict, with which sin has cursed this world; and through those ages, the successive generations of earth's vast population, with but few exceptions, will be adorned with "the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning." Deeply as we mourn the multitudes that now press the broad way to destruction, the number of the saved, we doubt not, will immeasurably exceed those that are lost. In the aggregate, they will be a number which no man can number—sufficient to satisfy Christ for the travail of His soul in the days of His griefs—sufficient to gratify

the heart of infinite benevolence. All these, not one less, are embraced in that Church which the Apostle here tells us, Christ loved.

And when he tells us that Christ loved this Church, he means more, much more, than the affection which Christ bears for his elect individually. This affection is indeed intense. Each one of the unnumbered multitude has been, from eternity, distinctly contemplated by the mind of Christ, and is, personally, as much the object of His notice, of His regard and affection, as if He alone was their exclusive object. The names of all his saints he bears deeply graven on His heart. There is no condition so humble, no retirement so lonely, no poverty so abject, as to shut one of them out from the tender sympathy, and the holy affections of His heart. But whilst Christ loves his people individually, thus intensely, He looks upon them as a whole, and the affection he bears to each becomes concentrated in the "Church, His body, the fullness of Him, that filleth all in all." The term church, in this connection, carries with it the idea of perfect unity as its essential characteristic. In its completion, when it shall have become a glorious Church, without spot or blemish, then the prayer of Christ in behalf of His people

shall be answered: "That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us." The basis of this oneness is their union to Christ. His Spirit dwells in each one of them, as the fountain and the source of their life, their joy and their blessedness; and, in their common participation of this one Spirit, they are in close and indissoluble union with each other. Their inner life springs from the same source, and love, its supreme law, rules every heart.

Sin broke up the union and harmony of the first creation. It separated man from God, and in that separation the bond, that would have united the race in love, was rudely sundered. Men are now in deadly conflict both with God and each other, except as restraints are imposed on their depravity. Regardless alike of the claims of justice and the ties of brotherhood, under the dominant influence of selfish passions, they have ever preyed on each other's happiness. Over crushed hearts and blasted hopes, through tears and blood, they have sought the gratification of their pride, their ambition, and their lust, and have filled the earth with the groans and wails of suffering humanity. Now, it is the purpose of Christ, and it will be the

great glory of His achievement, to bring back the wretched offspring of guilt and depravity, through union with himself, into union with God and each other—to restore the harmony, and more than the harmony, of the original creation—to make all one in Him, the second Adam, the Lord from Heaven—to bring back, through His Spirit reigning in all, the reign of perfect love, when the ties of a holy brotherhood shall be felt, binding the vast company of the redeemed in one perfect society, where every heart shall beat in unison, and the joy and the blessedness of each, shall augment the blessedness of all. There is now a progression toward this end. Amid all the jealousies and selfishness and antagonism of sects and denominations, the purposes of Heaven are ripening. Men shall not defeat what God designs. The exalted Saviour from His throne, sees His spirit permeating all the members of His body in heaven and earth; and though on earth it is in conflict with evil, and ever will be, yet He knows that His resources are sufficient to sanctify and cleanse His church, and present it to himself a glorious church, without spot or blemish. His infinite mind now contemplates this result with unspeakable joy, and as He looks upon His finished work, He loves it.

There is another idea embraced in the term Church as here used, not to be overlooked—organism as well as unity. The Church is the body of Christ. It is also called the temple of God. In these similitudes there is implied a perfect adaptation of its parts to each other, and the symmetry of the whole. This is essential to its perfection. So far as it can be secured, it is now an important means of its edification. From Christ, as its head, "the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted, by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love." Its perfection in this respect, however, is not to be looked for, until the Church, in all its members, comes, "in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." The temple of God will not be completed until the last living stone is taken to Heaven. Here, in this wilderness, the timbers are cut, and the stones are taken from the quarry, and dressed and fashioned, each for its place, and with such perfect exactness, that in rearing the temple above, the noise of the hammer shall not be heard. Every stone will have its place, its own place, its best place.

Not one could be spared without destroying the symmetry and the beauty of the entire structure. And when the top stone shall be brought forth, it will be with shoutings of Grace, grace unto it. It will be a temple reared by infinite wisdom and skill, to reflect the glory of God's grace.

Such, my brethren, is the Church that Christ loves, and for which "He gave Himself, that He might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." There is no other church that Christ loves as He loves this. All other churches, whether based on prelacy, or presbytery, or independency, are utterly worthless in His sight—and so they should be in ours, only as they are made to subserve His purposes in regard to this Church.

II. It is now evident, my brethren, why Christ loves this Church, and only this; because, viewed in its completion, it is that which, of all God's works, most perfectly and fully reflects the image of Himself. God dwells in light inaccessible—whom no eye hath seen or can see.

In heaven itself there is no direct vision of God, even among the most exalted of His creatures. The Son is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person;"—the Word through whom, and by whom, God is made known. "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath revealed Him." In the creation He has made Him known, for all things were made by Him. In providence, for He upholds and directs all things. But neither the robes of beauty and grandeur, thrown over this vast creation, nor the wisdom and power displayed in the machinery of providence, exhibit so much of the perfections and character of the invisible Godhead, as the Church of Christ viewed in connection with the means and the methods of its redemption. The innumerable myriads of the saved, raised up from the ruins and the degradation of the apostacy—redeemed by the blood and spirit of the Lamb—restored to the friendship of God—and united to each other in the bonds of perfect love, constituting the holy and blessed kingdom of Jesus Christ, for ever brightening with richer beauty and increasing blessedness, is the ultimate of all God's works, in which the heart of infinite love finds its

highest joy, as the most perfect image of itself —the fullest development of uncreated excellence.

And not only for the beauty with which He has adorned it, but the happiness he has conferred upon it, does Christ love His church. He not only loves the happiness of His people, but He loves them because they are happy; since their joy, their blessedness, is the immediate effect of that holiness which He has conferred upon them. In the completion and perfection of the church, when Christ shall present it to Himself, a glorious Church, holy and without blemish, it will exhibit the indissoluble union, which God has established between perfect holiness and perfect blessedness, and, in this respect, be the type of His own infinite nature.

But again, Christ loves His Church because it is the work of His own hands—the fruit of His own deep humiliation—the purchase of His sufferings and death. The condition of His people, degraded, ruined, lost, awoke the compassion of His heart, and moved by that compassion, He undertook their salvation. It could be accomplished only by His laying aside for a time, the manifestations of His divinity—fore-

going the homage of heaven—assuming the vestments of our degraded humanity—and offering Himself a sacrifice to eternal justice on our behalf.

To all this He cheerfully submitted. And the humiliation to which He condescended, and the sufferings He endured in behalf of His people, binds them more closely to His heart. The scenes of Bethlehem and Nazareth, of Gethsemane and Calvary, are ever present to His mind. He wears in His glorified humanity, the print of the nails that fastened His hands and His feet to the cross,—of the thorns that wreathed His brow, and remembers the agonies that wrung His soul. And as He looks upon the vast multitudes of His redeemed, brightening in His image, and ever increasing in their joy, He sees in each the travail of His soul, and His heart throbs with infinite love.—Surely, my brethren, Christ has the best reasons for loving His Church, for pouring out upon her the fullness of His affections, and rejoicing over her in His love. Even now, in her earthly state, yet soiled with sin, and, in her own view, black as the tents of Kedar,—in His sight who loved her, she is "beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem;" and with His head filled with dew, and His

locks with the drops of the night, He waits for her to open her heart to Him, that He may come, and bless her with His richest blessings. Yes, my brethren, if there be His hidden ones here in this assembly, His heart yearns with infinite tenderness toward us, and if we but turn in the sorrow, the affection, and the confidence of our souls to Him, He will come and bless us.

III. But how has Christ manifested His love for this Church? He has made all things else subordinate and subservient to it. Before the heavens were created, or the foundations of the earth were laid, in His own eternal purposes, the Church stood out before His mind, as the end, for which all else should be. It was the motive which called forth His power, in its mysterious workings, and which, out of nothing, brought forth ancient chaos, and from chaos evolved this material universe, the abode of holy, intelligent beings, created to behold the glory of God disclosed in, and by His Church, and drink of the fountains of bliss, which that disclosure alone unsealed. The introduction of sin into our world, the fall of man, with its far-reaching consequences, were permitted, in the mysterious

sovereignty of God, to furnish the occasion for the fuller development of His character, and displays of His grace, in the redemption of man by the cross of Christ, and the establishment and completion of His Church. "Oh! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out." The plan of divine providence, reaching from the fall of man onward, through all time, to its final consummation, has the Church of Christ for its central object.

Amid all its events, their relations, and influences, one spirit pervades and controls all, and all to one end, the salvation of Christ's chosen, and their union to Him and to each other in the brotherhood of love—His Church. For this the ages have rolled on, and generations have followed generations to the tomb, and the seasons have succeded each other in their order, and the stars have kept their courses, and the earth has pursued its way in its orbit, and the sun has known its risings and settings. For this, the world has been swept with the waters of vengeance, and cities have been consumed with fire from heaven, and the earth has reeled like a drunken man, and devoured her inhabitants, and

wars, and pestilence, and famine, have had their mission to destroy and consume. For this, nations and kingdoms have succeeded each other, and the potsherds of the earth have dashed against the potsherds of the earth, and wild ruin has reigned, and the pulse of the world beat heavily with the throes of suffering humanity. Could we draw aside the veil that conceals the ways of God from man; could we comprehend the vast, the complicated machinery of Providence,—those wheels within wheels, which the prophet saw in vision, and the living creatures sustaining the sapphire throne on which sat one like the Son of Man, we should see that one spirit pervaded all—"His, who bore for us the platted thorns with bleeding brows"—and that one great end rules all—that for which he became incarnate, and bled and died—the Church —His body—" the fullness of Him that filleth all in all." And thus will it be; the conflicts of ambition, and selfishness, and lust will continue; the noise of tumult and the din of battle will be heard—the gleam of God's holy anger will flash across this sin-accursed world, and lay in ruins its glory, and all things be made to subserve the Church, till the purposes of heaven respecting her are fulfilled, and her glory consummated.

Brethren, how else could Christ manifest His love for his Church? Exalted on his throne, head over all things—His, all power, and authority, and dominion—the kingdoms of nature and Providence under His supreme control—He makes all things subservient to the interests of His Church. Everything but His Church,—the glory of the earth and its riches, in his esteem, are worthless. Yea, men are given for her, and people for her life. The sacrifice of a world is little regarded, if necessary to secure her safety and promote her interests. The tide of human affairs, as it rolls tumultuously on, bears on its bosom the Church of Christ. He, who rides upon the whirlwind, and directs the storm, consults its safety, and that alone. The vast schemes and plans of earth shall all be dashed and overwhelmed in ruin—and their wrecks be seen floating on the misty ocean of eternity; but the Church of Christ shall be borne triumphantly over every wave, and through every howling storm, until finished and perfected, it reposes in the eternal calm of Heaven's complacency.

There is, my brethren, only one way more conceivable in which Christ could have manifested his love for His Church, and that is its

highest manifestation. He gave himself for it. Not contented with making the riches of earth subservient to its interests, He bestowed upon it the treasures of eternity. God is love—pure, unbounded love. In creation and in providence He has manifested the riches of His goodness toward us. But far surpassing every other exhibition, "in this was manifested the love of God for us, that God should send his only begotten Son into the world that we should live through Him." "Ye know, brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who though He was rich, for your sakes became poor, that ye through His poverty might be made rich." It is this, that has filled heaven with wonder—the bright spirits of that world suspending their songs, and concentrating their thoughts on this amazing truth, have desired to look into these things. In it there is a height and depth, a length and breadth, that surpasses all comprehension. It has wakened the song of the redeemed, which has already heard its response in the echoes of eternity—"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, unto Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

Brethren, in this, the highest manifestation

of his love for us, we mean to include all his condescending grace and goodness to each one of his people, that constitute his Church—in bearing with them through the years of their folly and sin, pursuing them through all their devious paths of transgression, arresting them in their iniquities, bringing them to His own feet in penitence and faith, and making them His willing people in the day of His power. Then watching over them, sanctifying to them the dispensations of His Providence and the means of His grace—protecting them through every deep and dark valley of trial and temptation, and blessing to them the fires and the waters of affliction, until prepared to join the general assembly of the Church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven.

"His sheep, his own peculiar care,
Though simply now they seem to roam,
Are led or driven only where
To bring them best and safest home.

"True, they nor know nor see the way,
But trusting to his piercing eye,
None of their feet to ruin stray—
None of them fail, or droop, or die."

Whom he loves, he loves to the end. Of all that has been given to Him not one shall be

lost. They shall all be brought safe to heaven, in union with that Church he loved, and for which He gave himself.

We have thus endeavored to show you what that Church is which Christ loved—why He loves it, and how He has manifested His love for it.

And now, my brethren, in the application of this subject, I would briefly remark that it is obviously our duty to be Christ-like in this respect as in every other—to have, on this subject, the same mind that was in Christ Jesus—to love the Church that He loved, and for the reasons He loved it, and as He did, subordinate everything else to its welfare, and solemnly devote ourselves to its highest interest. This affection, ruling in our hearts, will enable us to determine with safety, our duty under all those perplexing circumstances into which we may be thrown by the jealousies and conflicts of sectarianism, and give to the discharge of that duty, an unction that will silence gainsayers, and disarm opposition. It is true this Church is not visible to mortal eyes, nor will it be until the veil is rent, and amid the hidden things of God, it stands revealed in all its beauty and glory. But it should not on that account be the less an

object of intense affection to the Christian, nor should he devote himself the less to the promotion of its interests. Christ is an invisible Saviour, yet surely we can love Him—we can endure, as seeing Him who is invisible—we can make His honor and His glory the supreme end of our lives. And why not love an invisible Church, and labor with singleness of heart to promote its interests so as that all others shall be subordinate to it? It is thus that we have communion with Christ, and are honored as coworkers with Him, in the great objects for which He died, and rose again, and lives and reigns in heaven. In these times of contest about the Church that is visible and its interests, we need to have our hearts deeply imbued with the love of the Church that is invisible—we need to cultivate that faith "which looks not at the things that are seen, and are temporal, but at the things that are not seen, and are eternal"—which will take us out of the sphere of partisan strife, and call forth our sympathies, our prayers, and our efforts, pre-eminently for the Church which Christ loved, and for which He gave Himself.

Brethren, all our denominational interests are soon to come to an everlasting end—the glory of them will pass away like the clouds of the

morning. All our wisdom in planning—all our energy in executing schemes for the advancement of our denomination will be folly and weakness, only as they are in our hearts, and in reality associated with the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jerusalem above—there all our affections should centre—there all our hopes should terminate—for her all our efforts should be made :—

"There happier bowers than Eden's bloom,
Nor sin, nor sorrow know;
Blest seats, through rude and stormy seas,
We onward press to you.

"When shall these eyes thy heaven-built walls
And pearly gates behold,
Thy bulwarks, with salvation strong,
And streets of shining gold?

"Jerusalem, my happy home,
Name ever dear to me;
When shall my labors have an end,
In joy, and peace, and thee?"

Pardon me, my brethren, if it seems to you presumption in one, who knows, he is illy qualified to counsel you—pardon me, while I suggest, that those of you who have been honored by being placed, in the Providence of God, in those central positions, where it is expected you will exert an extensive influence in originating

and conducting plans for the advancement of our own section of the Church, especially need much of the spirit of Christ—much of the wisdom that cometh down from above—much of that love for His cause, which will lead you cheerfully and promptly to subordinate all denominational interests to its advancement.

From your position, your personal reputation and influence are more than most of ours, (who occupy less prominent situations,) identified in the public mind with the success and enlargement of our own branch of the Presbyterian Church; and you are exposed to the temptation of devising and prosecuting measures, that shall have too exclusive a reference to this enlargement, without duly regarding the far higher interests of that Church which Christ loved. You, doubtless, often meet the spirit of sectarianism misrepresenting your plans and your operations, and seeking to thwart your liberal devices; and you would be more perfect and more wise than the most sanctified of earth, if you were not tempted to meet this spirit by one of the same nature, and adopt a worldly, if not a wily and sectarian policy, to defeat opposition and carry into successful operation your own plans. Far be it from me to counsel you

with regard to the particular measures you should pursue, under any of those exigencies into which you may be thrown, by opposing denominational interests, and the conflicting spirit of sectarian rivalship. Yet let me humbly urge upon you the importance of habituating yourselves to looking beyond all merely denominational interests, to the interests of that Church which Christ loves, to which He has made all things subordinate, and whose glorious consummation is to be realized in the destinies of eternity. Let me urge upon you the importance of cultivating such an ardent love for this Church, that mere denominationalism shall ever be held in entire subordination to it; and entreat you to seek from God, in earnest prayer, the wisdom that cometh from above, that you may be delivered from a worldly policy, and be directed to such measures, and actuated by such a spirit in carrying them out as He will own and bless.

But while we speak thus, we would not overlook or be unmindful of the great importance of the visible Church, and its relationship to the invisible. The visible is the type of the invisible. It is its representative on earth and in time—it shadows forth, though but dimly and imperfectly, the glory that shall be revealed;

and so far as it embraces the spiritual seed of Christ, it is even now a partaker of that glory. The visible Church is the great instrumentality which Christ employs for gathering His people out from the world, sanctifying them by His spirit, and preparing them, by the discipline of His grace, for His Church above. Its nature and designs are of such importance, in our estimation, as to forbid the supposition that Christ has left its form of government a matter of indifference, to be determined by circumstances of mere expediency. He has provided for its organization, its officers, and its worship, and committed to it His word and ordinances, "for the perfecting of the saints—for the work of the ministry—for the edifying of the body of Christ, till they all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

We regard the visible unity of the Church as a matter of great importance, and cannot think that Christ sanctions its division into sects and denominations in order to promote its efficiency. Without, by any means, conceding all our enemies charge upon us, we must confess with shame, that these divi-

sions (the result of weakness or wickedness, or both) have ever been fruitful in strifes and contentions and jealousies, that have done incalculable injury to the cause of the Redeemer, and brought reproach upon His name. We cannot but mourn over the talent, the learning, the energy, the wealth, the effort, that is wasted, (often worse than wasted,) in building up the interests of a party which, if consecrated to the welfare of the Church Christ loved, would, with the blessing of God, convert the deserts of earth into the garden of the Lord, and swell the joys of heaven. But so it is, and it is unwise to spend our time in unavailing regrets, or engage in a crusade against denominationalism, in the vain expectation of securing, what no efforts of man have ever yet secured, unity in the visible Church. We must be contented to approximate as near to it as we can, and in the best way we can, while we hold ourselves ready to co-operate with others, in any way that Christian wisdom and prudence may suggest, to secure it. In the meantime, we are laid under the necessity of choosing, from the various denominations into which the visible Church is divided, the one with which we will connect ourselves, and with which we will co-operate.

In the exercise of this choice, under a sense, as we trust, of our responsibility to God, we are Presbyterians. Our form of government, our mode of worship, our system of doctrine, we believe, are, in their essential features, in accordance with the will of Christ. We think we see in its past history, not merely the approval of its Head, but the high honor He has conferred upon it. It gave the Gospel to the world in the first ages of Christianity, and sealed its truth with the blood of its martyrs. It continued to live during the long and the dark ages of apostacy, and from amid its mountain homes, its light peered up through the darkness that covered the world. In the Reformation it was brought forth in its beauty and strength. It stood up boldly in defence of the truth of God and the purity of His worship, and many of its sons and daughters cheerfully suffered death for Christ and His cause. Since then it has received many tokens of the Divine approbation, and been honored, by its instrumentality, in advancing the kingdom of the Redeemer. It is the Church of our fathers and our mothers. The remembrance of their piety, which we sacredly cherish as their richest legacy, is intimately associated with its doctrines, its worship,

and its communion. It is the Church within whose pale most of us were dedicated to God in our infancy, and where our hearts first received the saving impressions of Divine truth. Our solemn ordination vows were made in this Church, when we gave ourselves to Christ in the ministry of His Gospel, and in it we have laboured, some of us for many years, to advance the kingdom of our Redeemer. We feel that, on these grounds, our attachment to it is justified. We cherish that attachment, and we exhort you, my brethren, to cherish it, and to be no lukewarm defenders of its doctrines and its order, but that you endeavor to your utmost to extend its influence, and through it to build up the Church that Christ loved.

But, brethren, while we love our Presbyterian Church, and cherish, as we may, a strong confidence in her government, worship, and doctrines, as scriptural and divine,—while we cherish a just estimate of her past history, and the honor God has conferred upon her in employing her instrumentality for the advancement of His kingdom, and while we seek to employ all her means and resources for the enlargement of that kingdom, let us remember that God honors other churches and other instrumentalities in sav-

ing men, and training them for the Church above. Let us love and honor them, and sincerely pray that God's blessing may rest upon them and upon their ministrations. Let us habituate ourselves to those conceptions of the Church, which fill the mind of Christ, and call forth the affections of His heart, and hold our attachments to our own denomination subordinate to our regard for it, and be ever ready to make whatever sacrifices its welfare demands, though they involve the sacrifice of denominational interests, and we shall not lose our reward. The church that has most of this spirit, Christ will honor most. It will bear upon it the seal of His approbation. It will stand pre-eminent among the instrumentalities He will employ for the advancement of His kingdom, and it will share the largest in the rewards of His grace, in the final consummation of His designs.

THE END.